

CHAPTER 5: PRINCIPAL AND TEACHER SURVEYS

Background

Educational reform such as California's high school exit examination will exert an impact beyond just the receipt of a standards-based diploma. The reform will stimulate many changes throughout districts and schools, and will serve as a catalyst for those changes by providing feedback about students. In addition to the performance information, the assessment is seen as a way to influence and improve teaching and learning. Consequently, a key research issue is the relationship between the exit exam and teaching practices advocated by reform standards. One purpose of a thorough evaluation, then, is to find out about what is going on in the classrooms.

Surveys are one component of the evaluation method to examine such consequences and assess the impact of the HSEE over time. Two surveys were administered to capture baseline data: one for principals and another for teachers in the same schools. The principal survey requested demographic and background information about the school, students, and parents. The teacher survey emphasized classroom practices. Given administration of these surveys early in the HSEE development and implementation process, both principal and teacher surveys contained several open-ended items to allow the respondents to clarify their responses and to inform HumRRO of any misunderstandings or omissions we might have about the operation of California schools and their relationship to district and state operations.

The information collection and review conducted for the background report for the HSEE (see Chapter 2) were critical to formulation of guiding issues and questions for the surveys. The background report helped to establish the context for developing and implementing a graduation test by examining other states' experiences. Given the nature of this baseline data collection, using a small sample of California schools at a time when the exit examination is just being developed and pilot tested with another sample of schools, the surveys required direction for asking anticipatory types of questions. Because there is no immediate requirement for schools to implement the exit exam, the survey needed to allow for low levels of planning and preparation without attaching negative connotations to such levels. However, the researchers needed to provide a means to describe any early planning and preparation they did find. Based on HumRRO's prior experience during the pre-implementation stages of some major educational initiatives, an understanding of the process of "early and late planners and implementers" also was used to develop survey items.

Survey Development

The following are preliminary questions used to collect baseline data and to address issues of interest:

1. What are current graduation and college-going rates for different demographic groups?
2. What specialty education programs are currently offered?

3. What is the extent and type of current preparation for the HSEE?
4. What degree of familiarity do schools currently have with the HSEE?
5. How familiar are schools with the State Content Standards?
6. What plans are underway at schools to prepare faculty, parents, and community for the first administration of the HSEE?
7. What activities have schools undertaken to prepare students for the first administration of the HSEE, including students with special needs and English-language learners?
8. How do schools anticipate addressing failures on the HSEE?
9. What are schools' predictions for first administration pass rates?
10. What are schools' predictions for the impact of the HSEE?
11. What are schools' predictions for influence of the HSEE on instructional practices?
12. What are schools' predictions for opportunity to learn and opportunity to demonstrate knowledge and skills by various student groups?

Sampling and Administration

The goal for the sampling plan was to select districts for inclusion in the HSEE evaluation data collection efforts that would be as representative as possible. A complete description of the sampling procedure is presented in Chapter 1. The resulting sample for the principal and teachers surveys, as well as for the item review workshops, comprised 24 districts. An introductory letter from the State Superintendent of Public Instruction and a project “fact sheet” were sent to each district superintendent to provide information about the evaluation and to request cooperation with the effort. In HumRRO’s follow-up with the superintendents, they were asked to identify the principal, or other point-of-contact (POC), at the sample schools in their districts. Based on this information, principal and teacher survey packets were shipped in early May to 83 schools. Packets, which were sent to the attention of the principal or POC, included the following:

- Cover letter and instructions to principal
- One principal survey
- Cover letter and instructions to teacher
- Four teacher surveys—two labeled for English language arts and two labeled for mathematics
- Fact Sheet for California High School Exit Examination Evaluation
- Instructions and packaging for returning evaluation materials

Principals were asked to complete their questionnaire (or to designate someone to do so). They also were asked to identify, based on faculty size, up to two teachers of algebra 1 or other appropriate course, and two 9th or 10th grade language arts teachers to complete the teacher surveys. Each survey was contained in a sealable envelope to be returned to the principal for shipment to HumRRO. The cover letters to both the principal and the teachers encouraged respondents to contact a HumRRO project member if there were questions or concerns. A copy of the survey instruments is included in Appendix B.

Return of evaluation materials was requested by the end of May. Follow-up telephone calls were initiated the first full week of June with schools that had not responded, to check on the status of completing and returning their evaluation materials. This chapter reports preliminary findings based on returns up to June 19, 2000.

Initial Findings

Surveys were completed⁸ by 33 high school principals and 96 teachers. Preliminary results⁹ are reported in the following areas:

- Background
- Knowledge
- Preparation Thus Far
- Future Plans
- Expectations
- Other

Background

Principals were asked to provide some demographic information on themselves. Two-thirds of the respondents (22 of 33) were male; 70% were White; 8% Hispanic; and 6% declined to specify; 94% reported education beyond a bachelor's degree (6% some graduate school, 82% master's degrees, 6% doctorate degrees) and 6% responded "other." They were asked to identify their primary subject area when they were teaching; the responses varied widely. The most common subject was English (24%). The respondents reported between 1 and 30 years of experience as a principal (mean = 12.34, standard deviation = 7.79) and 4–33 years teaching (mean = 14.50, standard deviation = 7.78). They have worked 1–23 years in their present school and 5–38 years in public schools.

Teachers were also asked to provide demographic information. Over half (55%) of the respondent teachers were female; 84% were White; 7% were Hispanic; 5% were Asian/Pacific Islander; 1% were black; and 2% were other or declined to specify; 9% reported having only a bachelor's degree; most respondents reported education beyond a bachelor's degree (36% some graduate school, 43% master's degrees, 5% doctoral degrees); 6% indicated other education; 48% indicated that the primary subject area they taught was English or language arts; 45% specified mathematics as their primary subject area; and 7% indicated "other." Eighty percent indicated that their college training was in their primary subject area.

Principals were asked to provide background school information. The current number of teachers on staff ranged from 3 to 200, with a mean of 83 (standard deviation = 53). Principals reported that the percentage of teachers with advanced degrees ranged from 1% to 75%. Counselor-student ratios ranged from 1:1 to 1:1000, with a median of 400:1. Forty-

⁸ These counts include all surveys received as of 06/19/00. Surveys received after this date will be included in the final version of this report. Open-ended comments made by principals were analyzed, but those made by teachers were not included in this preliminary analysis.

⁹ All percentages will not total to 100% due to omitted responses to individual survey questions.

two percent of the responding schools currently have a testing coordinator; an additional 6% reported plans to have one by September 2000. Most schools (79%) operate on a semester basis; 12% configure their school year in quarters and 6% operate year-round schools. The majority of principals (73%) reported that their schools hold 6–7 academic periods per day. They reported, on average, a graduation rate of 80%, with varying rates by racial/ethnic group. Post-graduation attendance in two-year colleges averaged 29% and four-year colleges, 28%.

Principals were asked to indicate whether their schools offered various specialty education programs. Forty-eight percent offer remedial courses; 24%, magnet programs; 67%, special education; 46%, English-language learners; 15%, multicultural/diversity-based; 48%, Advanced Placement; 3%, International Baccalaureate; 33%, school/community/business partnerships; 30%, targeted tutoring; and 9%, other.

Teachers were asked to provide some information about their own classes. Asked to provide average enrollment per class period, responses ranged from 1 to 40, with a mean of 27 (s.d. = 6.3). Seventy-eight percent report that they create groups within classes for instruction. Of these, 65% assign students to these groups randomly; 11% use ability grouping; 7% allow students to choose their groups; and 18% indicated that they assign students to groups on some other basis. Twenty-five percent of teachers reported that 100% of their students were fluent English speakers; 47% indicated that 90–99% were fluent in English; 18% reported 75–89%; 6% reported 50–74%; and 1% indicated that less than 50% of their students were fluent in English.

Teachers were asked about various instructional practices. Thirty-eight percent of teachers require students to maintain a portfolio; an additional 12% indicated that they require another product in lieu of the portfolio. Three-quarters of teachers (77%) reported that students spend ½ hour or more of class time working with a partner or in a small group, on a weekly basis.

Teachers were asked to estimate the amount of time, on average, they believed students spend working on assignments outside the classroom each week. Half of the respondents (53%) estimated ½ to 3 hours; 21% estimated more than 3 hours; 18%, less than ½ hour; and 6%, none.

Teachers were asked to indicate the importance of specific instructional techniques. Techniques frequently endorsed as “very important” were: developing students’ abilities to make connections among content topics (78%), using questioning techniques to promote interaction and discussion (78%), using problem-solving as a means and a goal (77%), and using direct instruction (69%).

Teachers were asked to estimate how often they plan for students to participate in specific types of activities. The activities rated most frequently (once or twice a week or almost every day) were: do work from textbooks (86%), do work from supplemental materials (78%), apply subject area knowledge to real-world situations (74%), write a few sentences (70%), and work in pairs or small groups (69%).

Knowledge

Principals and teachers were asked to report their familiarity with the HSEE and state content standards. The majority of principals (76%) responded that they had only general information about the exam. Eighteen percent reported that they were very familiar with the exam, while 3% expressed no familiarity. Teachers reported less familiarity with the exam than the principals: 14% claimed to be very familiar, 62% generally familiar, and 24% reported no familiarity. Because we asked principals to identify a small number of teachers to complete this survey, we wanted to determine whether these teachers were representative of teachers at the school. To this end, we also asked the teachers to estimate how familiar other teachers at the school were with the exam. Indeed, other teachers were rated as less familiar: 3% very familiar, 60% generally familiar, and 34% not at all familiar. This is an indication that the respondents may be more involved with the HSEE than typical teachers.

It is unsurprising that the level of familiarity with extant state content standards was higher than with the as-yet-unimplemented exam. Fifty-eight percent of principals said they were very familiar with the state content standards, while 36% reported general familiarity, and 3%, none. Teachers reported more familiarity with state content standards than did principals: 69% very familiar, 25% generally familiar, and 3% not at all familiar. As was the case with the question on familiarity with the HSEE, these teachers rated their own familiarity with state content standards as higher than they did other teachers' familiarity: 36% very familiar, 46% generally familiar, and 5% not at all familiar.

One possible source of information on the HSEE and state content standards for teachers could have been the HSEE Educator Panel Item Rating Workshops. We asked teachers whether they had participated in either of the May 2000 workshops; only 9% indicated that they had.

Respondents were asked to identify the source(s) of their information regarding the HSEE. Most principals indicated that their information came through official channels. Principals reported receiving information from: district-provided information (94%), state-provided information (73%), newspaper (54%), professional associations (46%), education organizations (33%), computer-based sources (24%), and other (6%). Three percent of principals indicated that they had no sources of information on the HSEE. Teachers reported that their information came from: school-provided information (62%), district-provided information (40%), newspaper (28%), state-provided information (24%), education organizations (14%), professional associations (12%), computer-based sources (5%), and other (8%). Ten percent of teachers indicated that they had no sources of information on the HSEE.

Principals were also asked to estimate how familiar their students and parents are with the exit exam. Responses indicated a belief that the exit exam is virtually unknown outside the educational community. No principals responded that students/parents were very familiar or familiar. Only 12% said that they were somewhat familiar; 48% indicated that they were not very familiar; and 36% replied that students/parents were not at all familiar.

Preparation Thus Far

Although the HSEE has not yet been administered at any of the schools surveyed, we asked about preparation that has already been initiated. One precursor to a successful program is to align school curricula with the state content standards, to ensure that the test is testing what is being taught. Thus respondents were queried about alignment with state content standards. In short, principals indicated that most are already moving in the direction of alignment, but still have a way to go. Principals reported that 100% of their districts/schools encourage use of the content standards to organize instruction, and 79% said their schools are in the process of aligning their curricula to the standards. Fifty-two percent said that their schools/districts have plans to ensure that all students receive instruction in each of the content standards. Twenty-seven percent stated that their textbooks do not align well with the content standards; 36% report that they can cover all the content standards with a mix of textbooks and supplemental material.

Along similar lines, respondents were asked to compare their district standards and the state content standards. Most principals (73%) responded that their districts have adopted the state standards, and another 21% reported that their district standards include more than the state content standards. Thus, a total of 94% indicated that their district standards encompass all state standards. However, 3% reported that the state standards include more than the district standards, and 3% indicated that they could not judge. No respondents indicated that the two sets of standards were different, nor that their districts had no official standards.

Respondents were asked how much time they personally spent during the 1999–2000 school year in activities related to the HSEE (e.g., meetings, discussions, curriculum review, professional development). Most principals reported spending 6–15 hours (52%) or 16–35 hours (27%). Eighteen percent reported fewer than 6 hours; 3%, more than 35 hours. Most teachers reported fewer hours than principals: 19% none, 62% fewer than 6 hours, 9% 6–15 hours, 4% 16–35 hours, and 4% more than 35 hours. Teachers were also asked to estimate the total 1999–2000 time they spent on classroom instruction activities related to the HSEE (e.g., department planning, student preparation, curriculum review). A greater amount of time was reported for these activities: 19% none, 45% fewer than 6 hours, 16% 6–15 hours, 7% 16–35 hours, and 10% more than 35 hours.

Respondents were asked to identify the specific activities they have undertaken to prepare students for the first the HSEE administration. Although the students who will participate in the HSEE have not yet entered the 9th grade, most principals reported initiating some activities; only 18% indicated that they have implemented none. Figure 5.1a indicates the percentage of principals who reported implementing each activity; Figure 5.1b indicates teachers' responses. In general, fewer activities were reported by teachers; 33% indicated that none had taken place. This may mean principals were aware of some individual teachers implementing activities even though implementation was not schoolwide.

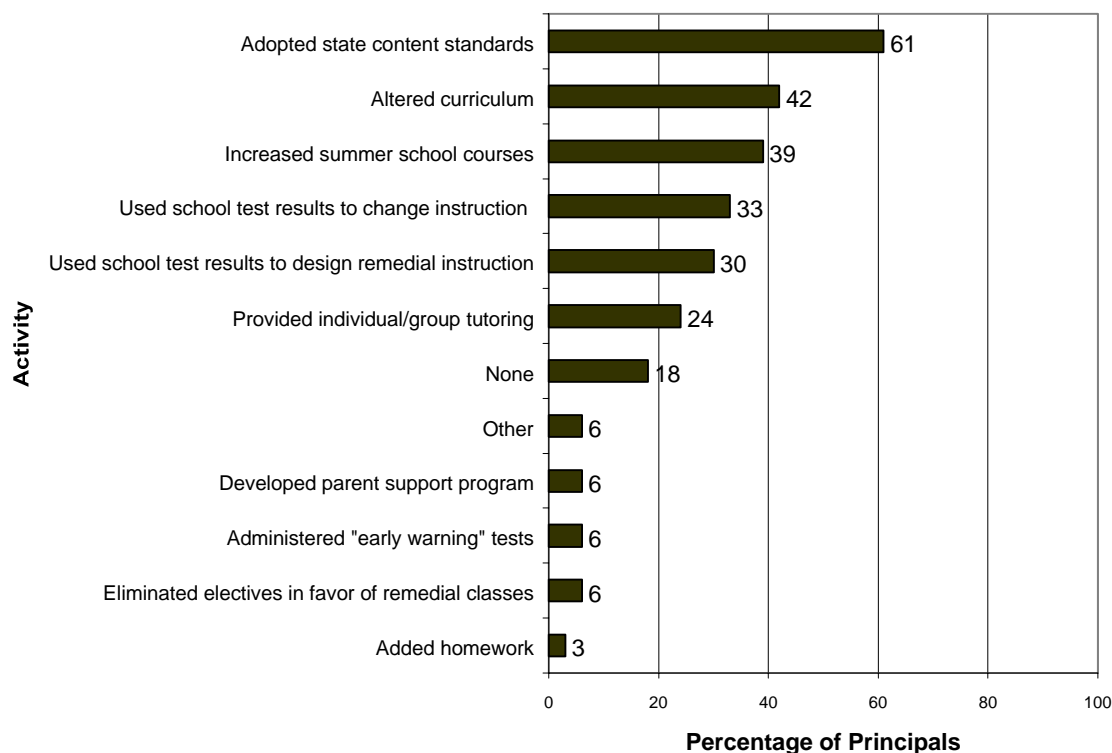


Figure 5.1a Percentage of principals reporting activities already underway to prepare students for the HSEE.

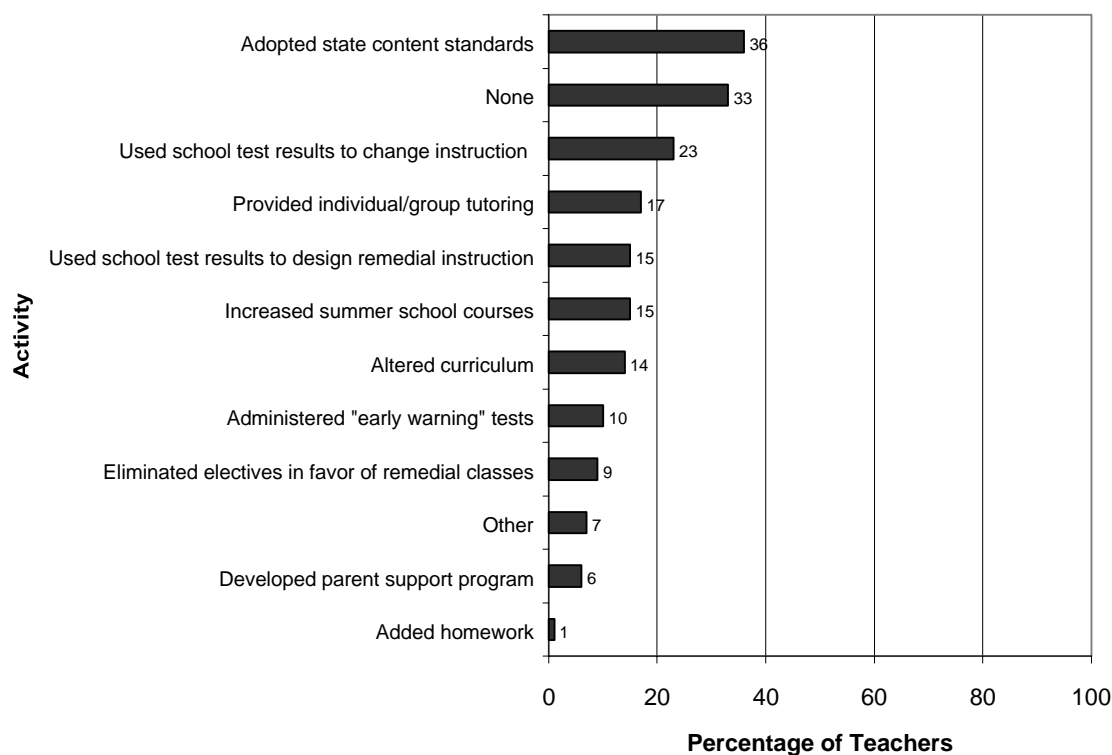


Figure 5.1b Percentage of teachers reporting activities already underway to prepare students.

Future Plans

In addition to any preparatory steps taken thus far, the surveys inquired about future plans to deal with this new requirement. In particular, efforts to prepare teachers and others for the exam, to prepare Individual Education Plans [IEPs] for special education students, and remediation plans subsequent to the first exam administration were probed.

Principals were provided a list of possible remedial practices and asked which they planned. Figure 5.2a lists the percentage of principals who endorsed each activity and Figure 5.2b reflects teacher responses to the same question. Similar to the pattern of preparatory steps, more principals reported activities than did teachers. For example, 15% of principals indicated that no plans had been made for remediation, compared to 36% of teachers.

Approximately half of the 40 open-ended responses on “plans to prepare staff, parents, and the community for the initial exam administration” cited plans for staff-related efforts such as department and faculty meetings, inservice training, and content and curriculum workshops. A third of the responses mentioned public outreach, parent communications, and general dissemination of information about the exam. Several respondents (8%) stated that they are waiting for direction from CDE—specifically to rule on staff development days that are not “buy back days.”

For principals, almost 30% of the 34 open-ended responses on “plans to work with students who fail the initial exam administration” reiterated that no plans had been formed yet, or that the schools were waiting on district plans or were waiting for the exam itself to plan. Half of their comments mentioned plans to notify parents and to offer tutoring or other practice, expanded summer school and reading programs, and development or modifications of remedial and exam support courses. Among the remaining responses were some specific plans such as (a) revising a student’s four-year high school plan to improve the areas of weakness, and (b) implementing a Fall 2000 mandatory parent and student orientation and administration of diagnostic tests in mathematics, reading, and writing.

Over half of the principals’ 21 open-ended response on “plans or strategies to prepare for IEP changes that will allow participation of students with disabilities” stated they had made no plans yet or that they will develop a plan according the law. A fourth of the comments said they would continue to follow the IEP recommendations for accommodations. Among the remaining responses were some specific plans such as (a) implementing a Fall 2000 plan to identify special needs students who are likely to participate in the exam and noting what accommodations will be needed, (b) starting to expose special needs students to algebra, and (c) including special needs student in other HSEE efforts.

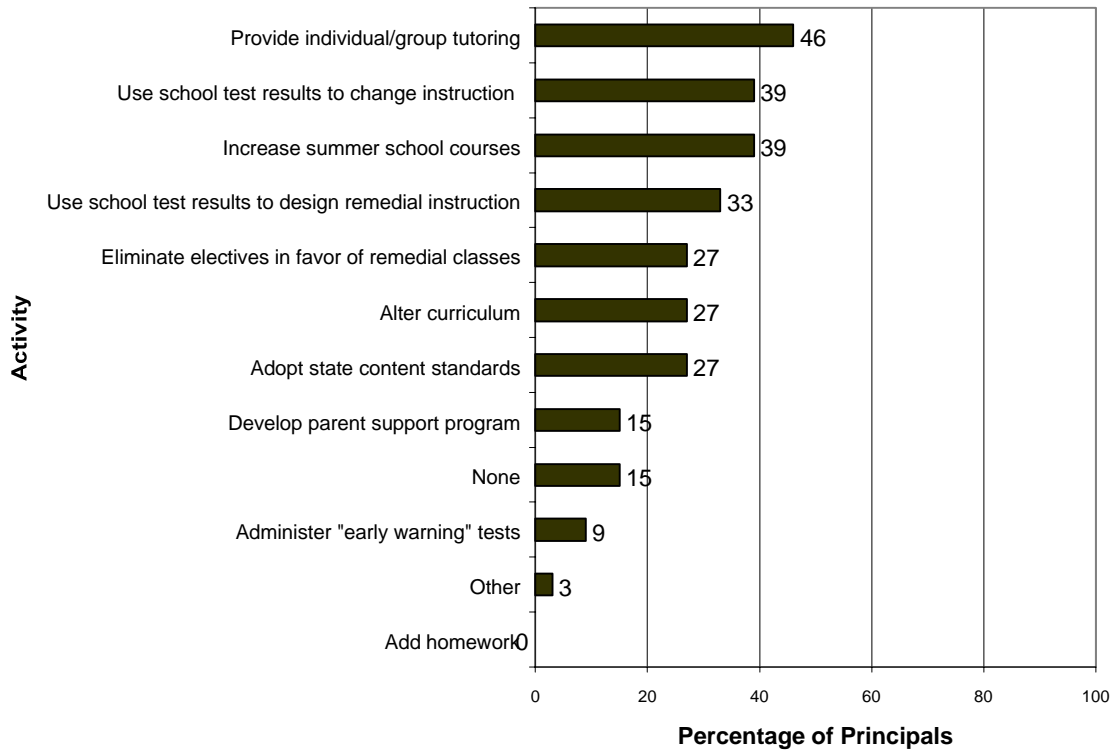


Figure 5.2a Percentage of principals reporting plans for remediation of students who do not pass the HSEE.

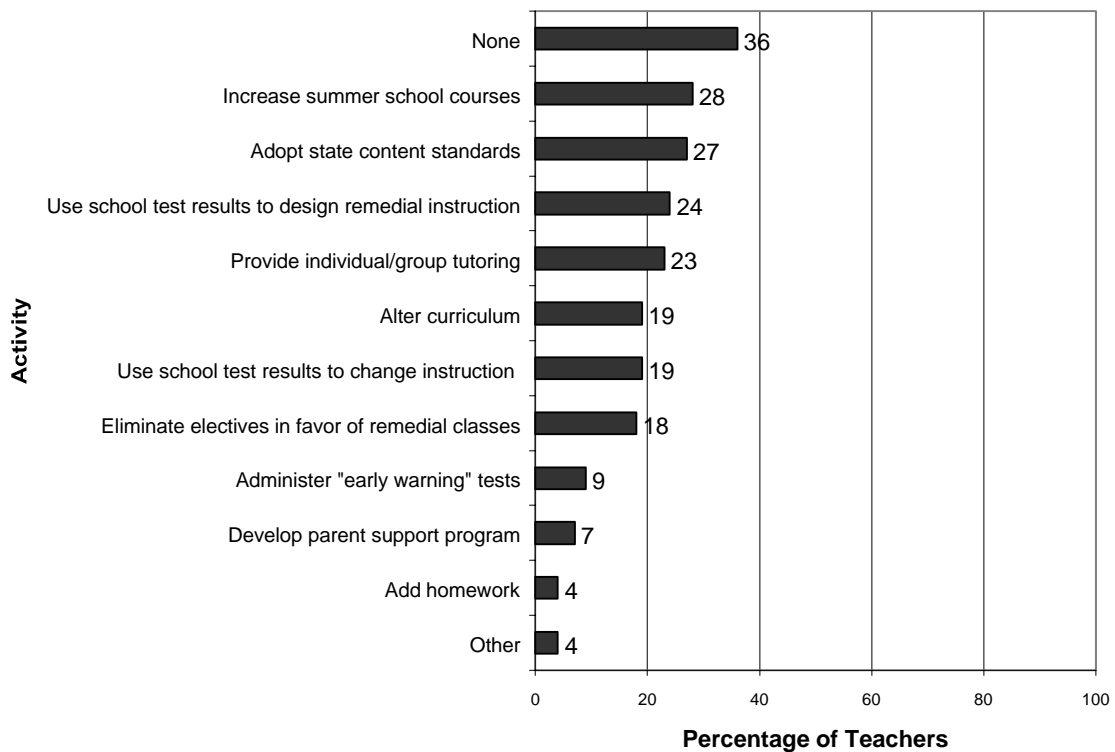


Figure 5.2b Percentage of teachers reporting remediation.

Expectations

Several survey items queried the respondent's expectations for the exam: anticipated pass rates, impact of the exam on student motivation and parental involvement, and so on.

Principals were asked to estimate the percentage of current 10th grade students (Class of 2002) who would deserve a passing grade on the upcoming exam.¹⁰ Responses were generally guarded. Nearly half (48%) of principals predicted that fewer than 50% of students would pass the exam; 30% predicted 50–74% of students would pass; 15% predicted 75–95%; and 3% of principals predicted that more than 95% of students would pass.

Teachers were asked two variants of the same question. They were asked to estimate the preparedness of students to pass the HSEE in the 9th grade and in the 10th grade, based upon the teacher's knowledge of the feeder schools. Twenty-one percent of teachers responded that students were prepared (or better) in the 9th grade; 46% indicated that students were prepared or better in the 10th grade. The responses were similar to those of the principals.

Principals and teachers were also asked to predict the impact of the HSEE on student motivation and parental involvement, under various circumstances. Figures 5.3a and 5.3b reflect the impacts anticipated prior to administration of the exam. Principals predicted a wider variety of impact on student motivation than on parental involvement. Some negative impact on student motivation was predicted prior to the exam, but largely neutral or positive effects were posited for parental involvement prior to the first administration. Comparison of Figures 5.3a and 5.3b indicate that teachers are somewhat more pessimistic than principals about the impact of the HSEE on student motivation and parental involvement.

¹⁰ Note that this cohort will not take the exam; the first class to participate will be the Class of 2004, which is now entering the 9th grade. Because the first participating group is not yet in high school, principals were asked to assess current 10th graders (Class of 2002) as a proxy for the Class of 2004.

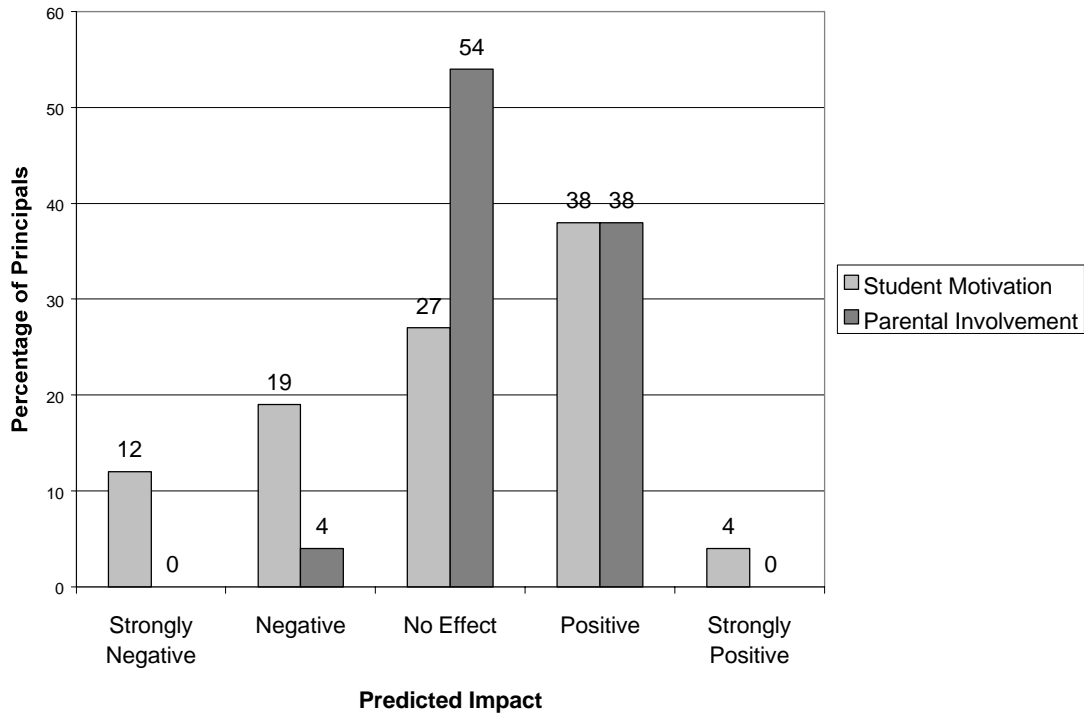


Figure 5.3a Principals' predicted impact of the HSEE on student motivation and parental involvement prior to taking the exam for the first time.

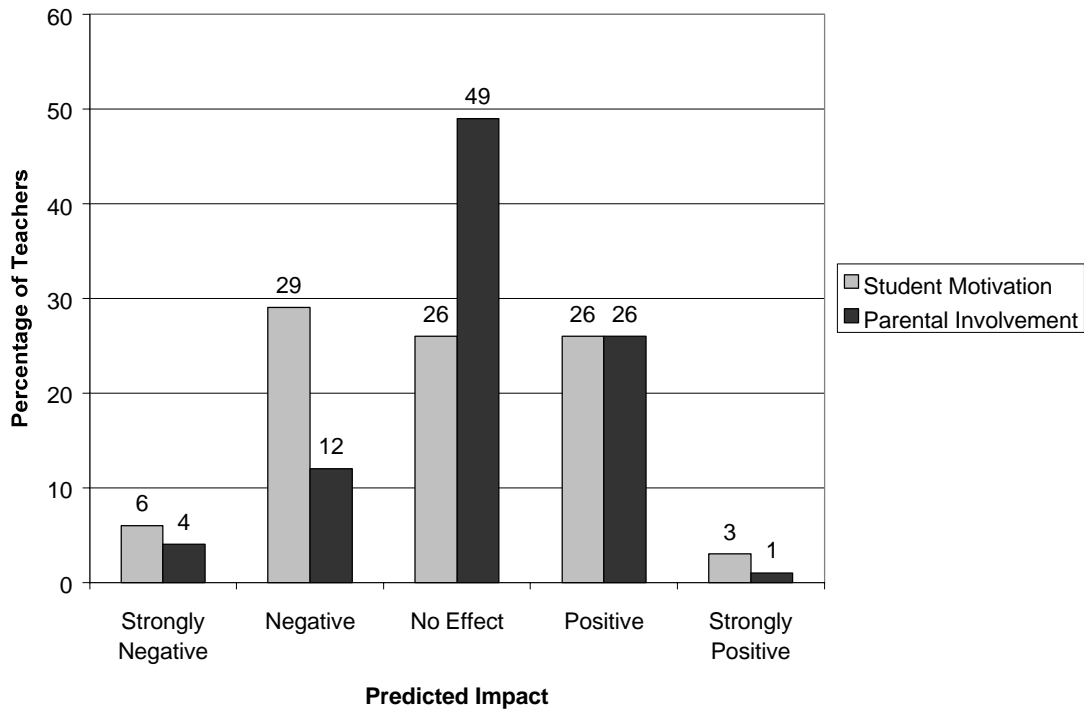


Figure 5.3b Teachers' predicted impact of the HSEE on student motivation and parental involvement prior to taking the exam for the first time.

Principals and teachers were asked to predict the same two concepts—student motivation and parental involvement—for those students who pass the exam in the first administration. The predictions for this group were more positive. Only 4% of principals expected that student motivation would drop after students cleared the hurdle of the HSEE. Thirty-eight percent of principals predicted that student motivation would be unaffected by passing the exam; 58% predicted a positive or strongly positive effect. Half of principals expected no impact on parental involvement; 35% predicted a positive effect and 15% a strongly positive impact on parental involvement for those students who pass the exam early in their high school careers. Here again, principals were more optimistic than teachers. Three percent of teachers expected a strongly negative impact and another 12% anticipated a negative impact on student motivation after passing the exam on the first attempt. Thirty-five percent of teachers predicted that student motivation would be unaffected by passing the exam; 42% predicted a positive or strongly positive effect. Half of teachers (49%) expected no impact on parental involvement; 9% expected a negative or strongly negative effect; 29% predicted a positive effect and 5% a strongly positive impact on parental involvement for those students who pass the exam early in their high school careers. Eight percent of teachers declined to estimate the impact of student motivation or parental involvement.

For those students who fail the exam on the first try, the principals' and teachers' predictions were quite different. Principals were split on whether the impact of failing the exam would have a negative effect on student motivation; 4% predicted a strongly negative effect; 31%, negative; 19%, no effect, and 42%, positive. No principals predicted that an early failure would have a strongly positive effect on student motivation. Predictions for parental involvement were very similar to those of student motivation: 4% predicted a strongly negative effect; 31%, negative; 15%, no effect; 46%, positive; and 4%, strongly positive. There was a similar pattern for teacher responses, albeit slightly more negative overall: regarding student motivation, 8% predicted a strongly negative effect; 27%, negative; 14%, no effect, 38%, positive; and 4%, strongly positive. As for parental involvement, 7% of teachers predicted a strongly negative effect; 19%, negative; 27%, no effect; 36%, positive; and 1%, strongly positive.

Principals and teachers were also asked to predict the impact of the HSEE on student retention and dropout rates. Responses were somewhat negative overall. Predictions followed a similar pattern on both questions. Fifty percent of principals anticipated a strongly negative or negative impact on student retention rates; 57% predicted a strongly negative or negative impact on student dropout rates. Thirty-one percent predicted no effect on student retention and 27% predicted no effect on student dropouts. Nineteen percent anticipated a positive or strongly positive effect on student retention rate and 16% expected a positive or strongly positive effect on student dropout rate. Teachers responded very similarly to principals, although as in previous questions, their answers were slightly more negative.

Principals were asked to predict, based on what they knew about their schools, the influence of the HSEE on instructional practices. Responses ranged from moderately optimistic to neutral: 79% responded that practices would be improved and 9% predicted no effect. No respondents chose the options of strongly improved, weakened, or extremely weakened.

Teachers were asked the same question about the influence of the HSEE on instructional practices, but they were asked to provide separate estimates for three school years. Figure 5.4 provides the responses for all three years. The pattern of responses indicates that teachers expect the HSEE to have a positive impact on instruction, and they expect that impact to grow increasingly positive over time.

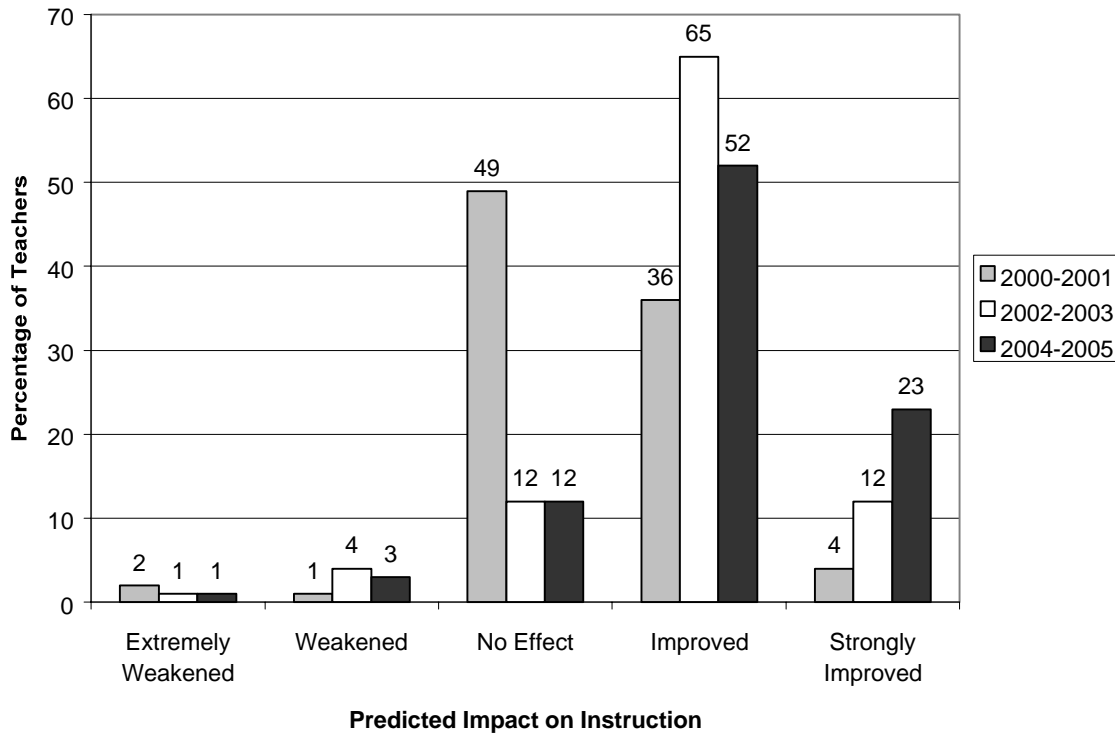


Figure 5.4 Teachers' prediction of influence of the HSEE on instructional practices over time.

One of the concerns when implementing a new exam is whether there is a differential impact on various subgroup populations. We asked principals and teachers to predict the opportunity to learn the material covered by the exam for the total student population, as well as for specific subgroups. Three percent of principals indicated that were not sure how they expected all students to have an opportunity to learn. Eighteen percent reported an excellent opportunity to learn; 24% selected good; 36%, adequate; and 12%, poor. No principals reported "no opportunity" to learn.

These same questions were asked about four other groups: students with disabilities, English-language learners, English-language learners in targeted subject areas, and economically disadvantaged students. The predictions were slightly more negative for the targeted groups; the predictions of poor opportunity to learn increased from 12% for all students, to 30% for students with disabilities, 30% for English-language learners, 24% for English-language learners in targeted subjects areas, and 18% for economically disadvantaged students. Comparison of principal responses and teacher responses revealed similar patterns.

We asked principals and teachers a similar set of questions regarding students' opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge and skills on the exam. For the full student population, 3% of principals expressed that they were unsure; 9%, excellent; 30%, good; 39%, adequate; and 9% poor. No principals selected a response of "none." For the various student subgroups, responses were less optimistic; a poor opportunity to demonstrate knowledge and skills was anticipated for students with disabilities by 27% of principals; English-language learners, 27%; English-language learners in targeted subject areas, 24%; and economically disadvantaged students, 18%. Teachers provided similar responses, although teachers estimated the proportion of each group having a poor opportunity as about 2–3 percentage points higher, across the board, than did principals. The sole exception was for the category of students with disabilities; teachers were more optimistic than principals, predicting that 24% would have a poor opportunity.

Challenges

When principals were asked to "describe challenges facing the school and students in successfully meeting the exam requirements," 30% of the 30 open-ended responses commented on existing low levels of student competency and skills of incoming high schoolers—especially for Continuation and Community Day schools. Also 30% of the comments described alignment issues, and 13% referred to meeting algebra and English language arts proficiencies—especially for English-language learners. Of the 20% who cited time requirements and the burden of testing, two comments particularly captured this challenge and underscore the lack of knowledge about the purpose of the test:

"We test too much behavior SAT9, SAT, ACT, Golden State, exit exam, end of course exams, A.P. When do we teach? It will take up almost the whole month of May—can we combine any of these tests?"

"We will offer a summer remedial program for 9th graders. We will visit the homes of the incoming 9th graders; [and we] will provide tutoring, [but] I think the testing system is too fragmented—too thinly spread out to be successful."

In describing "benefits to the school and students associated with the exit exam" two-thirds of the 19 comments cited having students meet a standard of basic skills in English and mathematics before leaving high school. The remaining responses were split between those placing a focus on curriculum and those who said there were no benefits or they were unsure about any benefits.

Other

Principals were asked to add any comments about specific factors at their schools that they felt would influence the exit examination. Of these 17 rather extensive entries, half described schools operating with students at the poverty level, with low academic preparation, and with disengaged parents. They also expressed concern that the exit exam will result in increased dropout rates. Two comments reiterated concern about the burden of adding one more test to an already challenging schedule. Two comments focused on the pilot test items. One of these stated that the items are very White, middle class and not representative of a diverse student population. The other objected to the group proportions

used in the pilot testing as over-representing special education and minority students and under-representing Caucasian students. They feared that the test results will not be a true reflection of their predominantly Caucasian school.

Summary

This preliminary analysis was conducted on a subset of the survey sample (i.e., surveys received by 06/19/00), therefore results should be interpreted with caution. Several points, however, stand out. Unsurprisingly, principals and teachers agree that they are more familiar with state content standards than with the HSEE. Principals rated themselves as more familiar than teachers rated themselves. These teachers, in turn, rated themselves as more familiar than their peers. This latter point may indicate that the sample of teachers who responded to the survey may be more knowledgeable about the HSEE than the typical teacher; this should be kept in mind when generalizing from these responses.

Some principals and teachers reported that they had no source of information on the HSEE. Most relied primarily upon official channels such as state sources and district sources; teachers reported a greater reliance upon newspaper accounts than did principals. Principals believed that students and parents are largely unfamiliar with the HSEE at this time.

Some preparatory activities have already begun. For example, many districts have made an effort to align their content standards with those of the state. The vast majority of principals indicated that their district content standards encompass all state content standards. Principals reported more preparatory activities than teachers did; a third of teachers were unaware of any preparatory activities thus far.

In addition to adopting the state content standards in preparation for the HSEE, most principals reported the importance of plans for preparing staff such as curriculum workshops, and inservice training. Most principals also reported initiating some type of activity to prepare students for the first administration of the HSEE such as altered curriculum and increased summer school courses. A third of the teachers, however, reported having no activity underway at the present specifically to help students prepare for the test.

Student preparedness estimates were mildly pessimistic; in general, principals provided slightly more optimistic predictions than did teachers. Some concern was expressed that students arrive at high school unprepared, and that elementary and middle schools must become involved in the process of preparing students for the HSEE.

Teachers and principals were in basic agreement about the impacts of the test in various situations. For example, predictions of the impact of the HSEE on student motivation and parental involvement, prior to the first administration, were neutral-to-mildly positive. For those students who pass the exam on the first attempt, school personnel expect that the effects on both student motivation and parental involvement will be positive or neutral; this expectation runs counter to the concern that students may lose motivation if they clear the exam hurdle too soon in their high school careers. For those students who fail on the first attempt, however, expectations are different. Relatively few respondents predicted that

failure would have a neutral effect on student motivation, but two camps emerged: nearly the same number of respondents expected a negative or strongly negative impact as predicted a positive impact. Principals and teachers were very consistent in their prediction that the effects of the HSEE upon student retention rates and students dropout rates will be negative.

Despite these concerns about the effects on student motivation and parental involvement, principals and teachers expected that the impact of the HSEE on instructional practices will be positive. Further, teachers were asked to estimate effects next year and in 3 and 5 years; they predicted greater improvement with time.

Respondents expect differential impacts for certain student subgroups. They anticipate that opportunity to learn will be lower for English-language learners and students with disabilities than for the student population as a whole. Fewer respondents believed that these differences will be seen with economically disadvantaged students.

In short, the preliminary analysis of surveys received to date indicate:

- A need for more information on the exam and staff development to support its implementation;
- Concerns about student preparedness;
- Mixed predictions about the impact of the exam on student motivation;
- Concerns about the impact of the exam on retention rates and dropout rates;
- Concerns about the success of disadvantaged groups, especially English-language learners and students with disabilities; and
- Positive expectations of the impact of the HSEE on instructional practices.